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HISTORICAL NOTE

The Society was founded in Oxford in 1931 by a group of about 20 pharmacologists. They were brought together on the initiative of J.A. Gunn, by a letter signed by J.A. Gunn, H.H. Dale and W.E. Dixon and sent to the heads of departments for teaching pharmacology and of institutions for pharmacological research in Great Britain, with proposals for the formation of a pharmacological club. There were favourable replies to this letter, and most of the recipients met in Wadham College on the evening of Friday, 3rd July, 1931, the day before the meeting of the Physiological Society. Professor Gunn presided over the meeting. It was agreed that a Society should be founded to meet at least once a year for the reading of papers on pharmacological subjects and the discussion of questions of teaching and publication and to promote friendly relations between workers in pharmacology. A provisional committee, consisting of the signatories of the original letter, together with Dr. M.H. MacKeith as Secretary, was appointed and instructed to draft rules and arrange a meeting in 1932. Next day the Society met in the Pharmacological Laboratory, where six papers were read and the practical classrooms were inspected.

This meeting in 1932 was held at University College London, when rules were approved which remained largely unchanged until 1958. Some new members, and the first two honorary members, J.J. Abel and H.H. Meyer, were elected. Among the guests at this meeting were V.E. Henderson (Toronto) and L.W. Gunn (Cape Town). The scientific business consisted of three demonstrations and five papers. M. Tiffeneau, W. Straub and W. Heubner were elected to honorary membership in 1934. In 1933 and 1934 the Society was augmented by several who left Germany to come to work in this country. Among them were: O. Krayer, W.S. Feldberg, Edith Bülbring, Marthe Vogt, and P. Ellinger. Partly as a result of their coming, the Society began to invite guests to its summer meetings and in the years from 1935 to 1939 there were repeated visits by many pharmacologists from abroad. The Society met annually, usually at Oxford or Cambridge and once at Edinburgh, until 1939. During this period, the Society gained a valuable international character and greatly widened its interests. The membership increased, and in 1939 a rule was suggested that it should be limited to 50. This rule did not become effective as the Society did not meet during the early years of the war and, at its next meeting held in August 1943 at the wartime premises of University College at Leatherhead, the proposal was explicitly dropped. The next scientific meeting was held in Oxford in the summer of 1945. The practice of holding a winter meeting was started in January, 1946, when the Society met at the Wellcome Research Laboratories at Beckenham and at University College. Meetings were then held every January and July. At the thirty-third meeting of the Society held in Edinburgh in July, 1956, the twenty-fifth anniversary of its foundation was celebrated. By that date the membership had risen to 207, including 9 honorary members.

By 1966, there were 438 members. In 1967, a more liberal membership policy was introduced and as a result, the rate of growth more than doubled; in January, 1973, membership was over 900. Numbers of communications submitted for meetings also increased and since 1968, four meetings a year have been held. To cope with the extra work, the Rules were changed in 1968 to add a Meetings Secretary; non-official Committee Members were also increased from a total of six to eight.

In addition to its original functions, the Society has from time to time accepted other commitments. *The Journal of Pharmacology and Experimental Therapeutics* had been founded by J.J. Abel (Baltimore) in 1909. He associated with him in this venture a succession of British Editors, A.R. Cushny, W.E. Dixon and J.A. Gunn. In 1933, it was agreed that this journal should be a joint publication of the American and British Pharmacological Societies and the latter society nominate three of the editors from that date until 1946, when its own Journal, the *British Journal of Pharmacology and Chemotherapy* began, edited by H.R. Ing and published by the British Medical Association. The link with the American Pharmacological Society was renewed in 1949 when British (and Scandinavian) representatives joined the editorial board of *Pharmacological Reviews* which had been founded in the previous year: this arrangement remains unchanged.

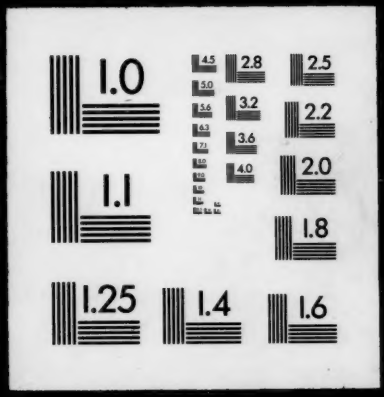
In 1968 Macmillan Journals Limited undertook publication of the *British Journal of*

Pharmacology and Chemotherapy on behalf of the Society. The Journal then changed to a new format and the abbreviated name of the *British Journal of Pharmacology*. From 1968 abstracts of communications and demonstrations have been precirculated to members and, after approval by the Society, published in the *British Journal of Pharmacology*. In 1974, the Society started to publish its second journal, the *British Journal of Clinical Pharmacology*. To mark the occasion, the format and cover of the established journal was changed so that both publications could have a similar appearance. The fiftieth anniversary of the British Journal of Pharmacology was commemorated by the publication of a special issue in 1986.

International contacts have flourished in recent years. There have been several joint meetings with European Societies; in 1960 with the Scandinavian Society in Copenhagen, in 1967 with the German Society in Cambridge, in 1968 with the Scandinavian Society in Edinburgh, in 1968 with the Italian Society in Florence, in 1971 with the French Society in Paris, in 1973 with the German Society in Berlin, in 1974 with the Italian Society in Bristol, in 1976 with the French Society in Oxford, in 1979 with the Dutch Society in Leeds, with the Italian Society in Verona in 1980 and in Edinburgh in 1985, in 1982 with the Scandinavian Society in Stockholm, with the Dutch and Belgian Pharmacological Societies in Amsterdam in 1986 and with the Portuguese Society in Nottingham in 1988. The Society was a co-sponsor, with the International Union of Pharmacology and the Royal Society, of the 9th International Congress of Pharmacology held in London in 1984.

Associate Membership of the Society, for Pharmacologists who live overseas, was introduced in 1958 and by 1972 there were over 130 members of this type. However, with increasing numbers of Ordinary Members working overseas, the distinction between the two groups became less clear and in 1973 the Society combined them into one class of Ordinary Membership. In July 1974 the total membership of the Society reached one thousand. By December 1986 this number had risen to more than 2,000.

In September, 1970, a Clinical Pharmacological Section of the Society was formed. Meetings of the Section take place as an integral part of the meetings of the Society. The Society celebrated the 50th Anniversary of its foundation, with a meeting at Oxford in September 1981.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